

RATCHEL FAYETTE

by BILL GRIMSTAD

'What's in a name?' — that handy phrase condensed from Shakespeare — has been forcibly retired by many American editors these days. Perhaps rightly: it does tend to find its way with frequency into stories and headings. The saying obviously fills some need. But I will avoid using it here, mainly because the answer to its question, usually left dangling, is the subject of this little disquisition. That is, I will assume for the moment that there is an answer . . . somewhere.

The American writer John Keel was, so far as I know, the first to notice name-frequency correlations in paranormal events. In his deceased magazine, *Anomaly*, Keel observed that the name McDaniel has recurred at far greater than random rate. A man named McDaniel was confronted by a three-legged 'creature' at his farm near Enfield, Illinois, in 1973. Another family of that name was the centre of the 1966-67 'Mothman' episode in West Virginia; and a man named McDaniel was involved in an encounter with 'the Devil' in the Catskill Mountains of New York in the 1870s. [1]

My candidate for this peculiar nomenclature is the name Fayette and its variants Lafayette and Fayetteville, which appear in a number of localities scattered across America. In the course of cataloguing all sorts of weirdities, I soon noted the frequency with which 'Things', as Ivan Sanderson used to call them, arise in conjunction with this name.

The historically minded might think first of the prestigious Marie Joseph Paul Roch M^otier de Lafayette, the French revolutionary general and statesman who played such a role in the early years of the United States. Lafayette travelled widely in this country and doubtless must have been the inspiration for many or most of the 18-odd counties and 28 towns and cities across the land that I have been able to find with some form of his name.

But not all of them, apparently. In New England, the name first appears on a divergent site in 1759, when Elder Paul Coffin noted in his diary that 'There is Magic and Witchcraft in Fayette' (state of Maine). He referred particularly to the 'Moving Arm Ghost', said to rise up from the spring near Jolly Hollow with a copper dipper for thirsty passersby, while at least accommodating times, something irritably splashes water on those visiting the spring. 1759 is but two years after Marquis de Lafayette was born, in France, so there must have been some earlier naming antecedent. [2]

In a moment, I would like to come back to what some regard as the darker side of Marquis de Lafayette, together with some of the more sinister manifestations connected today with his name. But first, let me take a quick skim through my Fayette case file.

In Fayette County, Alabama, is the Musgrove Methodist Cemetery. The tombstone of one Robert L. Musgrove there bears a discoloration, not specially realistic, that is locally believed to be the bridal-veiled figure of Musgrove's fiancée. Apparently he was killed just before the wedding, and the

sorrowing girl decal'd her outline onto the marble by her many visits to the grave.

The enigma-laden state of Arkansas has two sites. The city of Fayetteville, in the northwest corner, has long been legendary for oddities. UFO and aerial lightshows, water monsters in the nearby White River and Springheel Jack-type window peepers are among the manifestations. In the southwest angle of Arkansas is a Bigfoot hotspot that has been immortalised, in America at least, by the movie *Legend of Boggy Creek*. The critters have been known hereabouts since 1856, centring their activities lately upon the town of Fouke in Miller County and ranging eastward into adjacent Lafayette County.

In the scenic Bluegrass area of Kentucky, the university city of Lexington sits atop one of America's more dramatic lost cave stories. Historian G.W. Ranck recorded in 1872 that hunters in 1776 had found a tunnel behind a rock panel of 'peculiar workmanship' and covered with hieroglyphs. The descending portal widened to a sort of gallery running downward a few hundred feet to a huge underground room. Ranck cited the hunters' reports that this chamber contained idols, altars and about 2,000 human mummies. Although the entrance to the amazing cavern was (of course) lost, there still are cave true-believers who poke about looking for the weird mausoleum beneath this part of Fayette County.

In a famous travelling cat incident of a few years back. Chat Beau, a four-year-old male, successfully located his human family in Texarkana, Texas, after they had moved 300 miles from Lafayette, Louisiana. [3]

Followers of ghost lore may have heard of the recent antics of a supposed phantom in Lilac Hill, a large old farmhouse at Fayette, Missouri. A number of psychically sensitive individuals have been trying to discern what is troubling the alleged spirits, of whom there are said to be at least two. [4]

In New York State, a farm near Cardiff, ten or so miles south of Syracuse, was the starting point in October 1869 for one of the more sensational fossil controversies. The 'Cardiff Giant' is still displayed at a museum near Cooperstown: although it has long since been dismissed as a total hoax, there are some puzzling aspects to the case that seem to make it a bit less than 'open and shut'. I cannot explore these now, but will merely note that many legitimate instances of petrification of animal and human remains have been reported from this area of Onondaga County south and east of Syracuse.

I must also note a certain historical confusion that I have not yet resolved: the modern city of Fayetteville, lying ten miles east of Syracuse, is some distance farther from Cardiff than was the 19th century town of La Fayette, which appears from contemporary accounts to have been only a short way from the 'Giant's' point of origin.

At this writing I am awaiting exact information from New York sources. I hope that this also will help elucidate an episode several decades earlier which, although little noted at the

time, was to have great consequence in the history of religious movements. It was in April of 1830 that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) was founded by Joseph Smith and a few disciples — who claimed to have received more than a little help from certain 'angelic' friends in the neighbourhood. The place: Fayette, New York. Today, the Mormon Church is the fastest-growing Christian denomination in America, if not the world.

Another haunted house story takes us to an American state that perhaps rivals New York and Arkansas in the number and interest of its anomalies. It also brings us back across the trail of the peripatetic Marquis de Lafayette. This is the A.S. Slocumb mansion, located in the North Carolina city of Fayetteville. The Slocumb house is supposed to have a number of spectral occupants. It also has, or had, a secret vault in the basement and at least one tunnel leading to the Cape Fear River channel — which river has historically been the site of many Bigfoot reports.

Local records connect the Slocumb house with the affairs of the mysterious Bank of the United States (hence the vault), which was extirpated by the forces of President Andrew Jackson, amid charges of all sorts of hair-raising conspiracies. Whether Lafayette's own recorded visits to the house have any connexion with either the ghosts or the conspiracies is, unfortunately, not recorded.

Early this year, the United States experienced one of its most severe winters. Certain places were especially belaboured with extreme cold and repeated snowstorms. As of February 3, 1977, the National Weather Service announced that the 'hardest hit area' of the north-central states region was Fayette County, Ohio, about 44 miles southeast of Dayton. [5] In 1897, however, during the celebrated 'great phantom airship' excitement that swept across the country, Fayette County skies had been decorated with flurries of a different kind: mysterious paper balloons and kites, which are now usually described as the work of 'pranksters' inspired by the publicity growing from the cavortings of the 'airship'. [6]

As soon as spring arrived this year (1977), a farming area in north-western Ohio began experiencing a different sort of bedevilment. By early May, 140 sheep, five peacocks and possibly a dog were mysteriously killed by a something that tore out their throats. Footprints resembling those of a large felid were found. In mid-May, a motorcyclist was swept off the road by a mysterious force that he was at a loss to describe afterward. All of these untoward events occurred in the vicinity of Fayette, Ohio. [7]

Whether the hobby exists in other countries I do not know, but a very widespread diversion in America is the search for lost treasures. There are countless books and magazines on the subject, although if I were to do one I would focus on the obvious psychological factors at work. The 'treasures', real or imagined, seem to be more a pretext to go rambling off in search of the legendary lost than a quest of wealth per se.

Treasure stories time and again display Fortean aspects. One that suits the present purpose is the story of 'Braddock's gold', in which the British general of that name is said to have lost a wagon-load containing his own personal fortune and the crown revenues for his campaign. In 1755, Braddock's force was routed by a French and Indian attack not far from Fort Cumberland, on the Monongahela River. The gold wagon disappeared and has been fervently sought by treasureologists ever since. Somewhere along the way, and presumably after the fact, the area became incorporated into Fayette County, Pennsylvania. [8]

Ordinarily, the Bigfoot phenomenon expresses only a fugitive interest in human situations, skulking in the shadows of lovers' lanes, metal trailer houses (accidental Reichian 'orgone boxes') and women undergoing their menstrual periods. However, one of these hairy horrors became rather more aggressive on April 23, 1976, when it attempted to carry off a four-year-old boy from his backyard on a farm in Tennessee.

A sheriff's posse pursued the entity and seems to have shot

enough high-powered rifle fire into it to have felled King Kong' himself. However, as if tiring of the game, the creature finally leaped out of its cul-de-sac and simply vanished. These events occurred within a few miles of the hamlet of Fayetteville. [9]

In Fayette County, West Virginia, atop a low peak named Mt. Carbon, is one of the more curious ancient remains in North America. This is a series of semicircular and V-shaped stone 'windrows' strung out along the mountaintop. Archaeologists so far have been at a loss to explain such hilltop stone workings, which are also found in New England and in certain Western states.

Another Bigfoot-type creature was seen in Lafayette County, Wisconsin, in early September, 1970. It was seven feet tall with whitish fur and the usual shiny red eyes. More than 50 persons from the vicinity of Benton joined in a search for it, but were unable to find anything. [10] In 1936, an amateur aviator touched off a still hotly debated question around Rock Lake, which lies midway between Madison and Milwaukee in the southeast quarter of Wisconsin. A resident of the neighbouring town of Lake Mills, this pilot claimed that he had seen what looked like manmade rock structures beneath the shallow waters. The flyer's name: Fayette Morgan.

Recently, there has been a renewed Rock Lake controversy in underwater diving circles with amateurs claiming that they have rediscovered the 'pyramids', while professional underwater archaeologists sternly denounce such foolishness. [11]

Now I would like to consider some examples of more ominous character. We find the 'Lafayette factor' in the Abraham Lincoln assassination in the 1860s, although admittedly in comparatively trivial ways. A slippery character named Lafayette had been brought in to head the Secret Service by the enigmatic Edwin Stanton, President Lincoln's arrogant secretary of war. Otto Eisenschimi, the pioneer revisionist historian of this amazingly crude murder conspiracy, delved into the story as far as the surviving evidence would allow.

His findings suggest that Lafayette Baker and Stanton had manoeuvred to facilitate the escape into the South of assassin John Wilkes Booth, and when that proved impossible (owing to his unexpected broken leg), to assure that the killer was *not* brought back alive and that his evidently incriminating diary did not survive intact. But the full story will have to be sought in the writings of Otto Eisenschimi. [12]

At the same time as the President was being shot in the theatre box, his secretary of state, William Seward, was attacked and savagely knifed by a deranged giant named Lewis Paine who had forced his way into the Seward home. This house fronted upon Lafayette Square, just across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House. Washington's resident ghost expert, journalist John Alexander, has written of this square:

As you read these tales involving many of the residents of the square, you may find yourself in agreement with Washingtonians who refer to it as 'Tragedy Square'. No other section of Washington has had so much intrigue, mystery, murder and macabre happenings as has the area directly opposite 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. . . [13]

Ironically, Secretary Seward had had a different brush with the Lafayette vector himself a few months before the assassination. A man named John Yates Beall had been convicted of spying for the Confederacy and was sentenced to die. Apparently this was another of those many cases in which there was much more than has met the official eye of history, for somebody or other galvanised a surprising number of Establishment bigwigs, who brought great pressure upon Lincoln to commute the death sentence.

However, it was Seward who reportedly encouraged the

* — KK, of course, had a crush on Fay Wray — Ed!

President to stand firm, and Beall was accordingly hanged at Fort Lafayette near New York City's 'Hell Gate' — on February 24, 1865. An insight into the bizarre affair emerged some years later when a close companion of Beall's at Fort Lafayette expressed his opinion that agent Beall may well have been involved in the planning of Lincoln's killing. Others were quick to infer that the attempt upon Seward may have been in retaliation for his insistence on executing Beall. [14]

Moving along almost a century, we find another grisly 'executive action' being carried out by conspirators unknown. According to New Orleans District Attorney James Garrison, one of the very few local authorities with the fortitude to carry out any kind of investigation of the John F. Kennedy killing, much of the actual planning of the 'hit' carried out in Dallas, Texas, was done in New Orleans.

The location: various sites centring on Lafayette Square and a decrepit office building just across Camp Street from it. In the *Warren Commission Report* on the assassination, the address of the building given is actually its side entrance: 531 Lafayette Street. [15]

On July 3, 1977, 23-year-old Gary Rock was charged on two counts of criminal homicide after two local volunteer firemen were killed by a sniper while responding to a fire alarm at Rock's isolated cabin, near Fayetteville, Pennsylvania [16]

On July 31, 1977, two young people sitting in a parked car along the Brooklyn, New York, seashore were shot several times by a mysterious assailant who had become known as the 'Son of Sam'. The girl, Stacy Moskowitz, died of her injuries; her companion, Robert Violante, suffered eye damage. Miss Moskowitz was an alumna of Lafayette High School. When she and Violante were shot, it was while they were sitting 'not far from Lafayette High School', according to the *New York Times*. [17]

I have other such instances in my files, but I think I have conveyed the general idea. What kind of interpretation can we make?

I suppose it might be argued that a similar case could be made by selecting any of a number of other names or places where 'Things' happen and then rummaging out enough incidents to suggest a pattern. If so, I haven't bothered to make the attempt. The Fayette factor was so obvious and so widespread — an important aspect — that it required no forcing by me. Indeed, I have noted several other such names that seem to have a weird wound around the country: Bell (or Beall, as in the Lincoln conspiracy); Francis and St. Francis; Montpelier; Mount Vernon, and Parsons.

However, the number of instances I have found to date is far smaller than for Fayette. (There also is a very striking 'data cluster' pertaining to the mineral quartz, and it even has a tie-in of sorts with Fayette, but I must save that for consideration another time.)

So, what does it all mean? Merely a high order of 'coincidence' that for some reason happened to zero in on this name? It's possible, I suppose. I admit that I have nothing to fall back upon except my own intuition that there is more to the matter than this. But for those positivists inclined to dismiss possible anomalies too quickly on such semantic grounds, let me recommend a quick review of Fort's remarks on coincidence (for example, pages 849-850 in the *Complete Books* — New York, 1974). Arthur Koestler's recent *Roots of Coincidence* takes up where Charles Fort left off.

An 'explanation', I grant, is out of the question. Besides, who wants one, anyway? My first impulse is simply to analyse the word. Literally, the meaning would be something like 'little enchantment' or 'little fairy' (from the Old French root *feer*, 'to enchant', plus the feminine diminutive *-ette*). This much is easy. But of course I haven't the tiniest ghost (fayette?) of an idea how to parlay a word root into a mechanist scenario for the physical and psychical phenomena we have examined. Perhaps 'black arts' students of the technology of name magic

used in controlling supposed supernatural entities can shed some light here.

My second suggestion could lead off into vast, trackless wastes of arcane speculation, so I will try to be as concise as possible. We must go back once more to Marquis de Lafayette for a topic that may not be totally persuasive to all, but which will, I hope, prove stimulating to the Fortean imagination, pro or contra.

In addition to his political pursuits, Lafayette was busily involved in certain circles that should be of interest to contemporary Illuminati buffs. A subject of the utmost interest to the intellectual elite of Lafayette's day is one that gives signs of a comeback, in this day of Kirlian 'auras' and subatomic particles imbued with 'charm' and Buddhahood by sobersides Ph.D. physicist types.

The subject then was known under the general heading of 'magnetism', and referred to a supposed biophysical energy that was felt to be innate to all organic processes, and to possess other powers verging on the magical. Although the general idea is said to date from Rosicrucians and alchemists of the middle ages, and has been investigated by people ranging from chemist Karl von Reichenbach ('Odyle') to psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich ('Orgone'), perhaps its most famous exponent was Anton Mesmer, the Viennese physician whose findings led to the modern study of hypnosis.

But Mesmer also seems to have been active in that vague twilight zone where esoteric matters merge into the cryptopolitical; more than one writer on the Bavarian Illuminati has identified him as a member of that group. Another suspected member was the colourful Cagliostro, the subject of much speculation by Charles Fort who seems to have regarded him as a virtual byword for the inherent trickiness and fraudulence of the visible universe. Although I do not have any evidence at hand, there seems little question that Cagliostro must have been *en rapport* with Mesmer when the former set up his 'Magnetic Masonry' as an offshoot of the Egyptian Masonry by which he was cutting such a wide swath in French high society, and laying such fateful groundwork for the upheaval to come in 1789.

According to the contemporary American scholar Manly Palmer Hall, one of the more levelheaded writers on the extremely convoluted and controversial history of 'occult' matters, Lafayette was affiliated with both of these fateful men:

... In 1785 the Marquis ... joined the Egyptian Masonry of Cagliostro and proclaimed his absolute confidence in the Grand Cophte. When Anton Mesmer arrived from Vienna with his theories of animal magnetism, Lafayette was one of his first customers. [18]

But Lafayette also had the closest ties with Benjamin Franklin, the American revolutionary sage (and member of Dashwood's crypto-Satanist 'Hell-Fire Club' in Britain). As Hall puts it:

Benjamin Franklin was a philosopher and a Freemason — possibly a Rosicrucian initiate. He and the Marquis de Lafayette — also a man of mystery — constitute two of the most important links in the chain of circumstance that culminated in the establishment of the original thirteen American colonies as a free and independent nation. [19]

Lafayette, Hall summarises, 'is a direct link between the political societies of France and the young American government. [20]

What I have to ask (perhaps never to learn the answer) is whether this 'man of mystery' was involved in anything other than the vague deism and 'rights of man' posited by the public face of the secret societies which worked behind the backdrop of the supposedly spontaneous American Revolution. Was this 'magnetism'-steeped gentilhomme whose celebrated

tours about America were virtual Masonic pilgrimages from one prominent lodge to another actually an adept of sorts?

There is a very strong tradition in New Orleans that Lafayette made a special point of meeting the powerful Voodoo queen, Marie Laveau, when he made his spectacular visit there in April 1825. In fact, Laveau herself insisted that the general had even kissed her on the forehead. As historian Raymond Martinez points out, in his *Mysterious Marie Laveau*:—

In justice to those who think that Lafayette may have been interested in seeing Marie, it is fair to state that he had been at one time a patient of Franz Anton Mesmer, who introduced into general medicine magnetic therapy based on the laying on of hands. [21]

Voodoo, it would appear, is intensely magnetic.

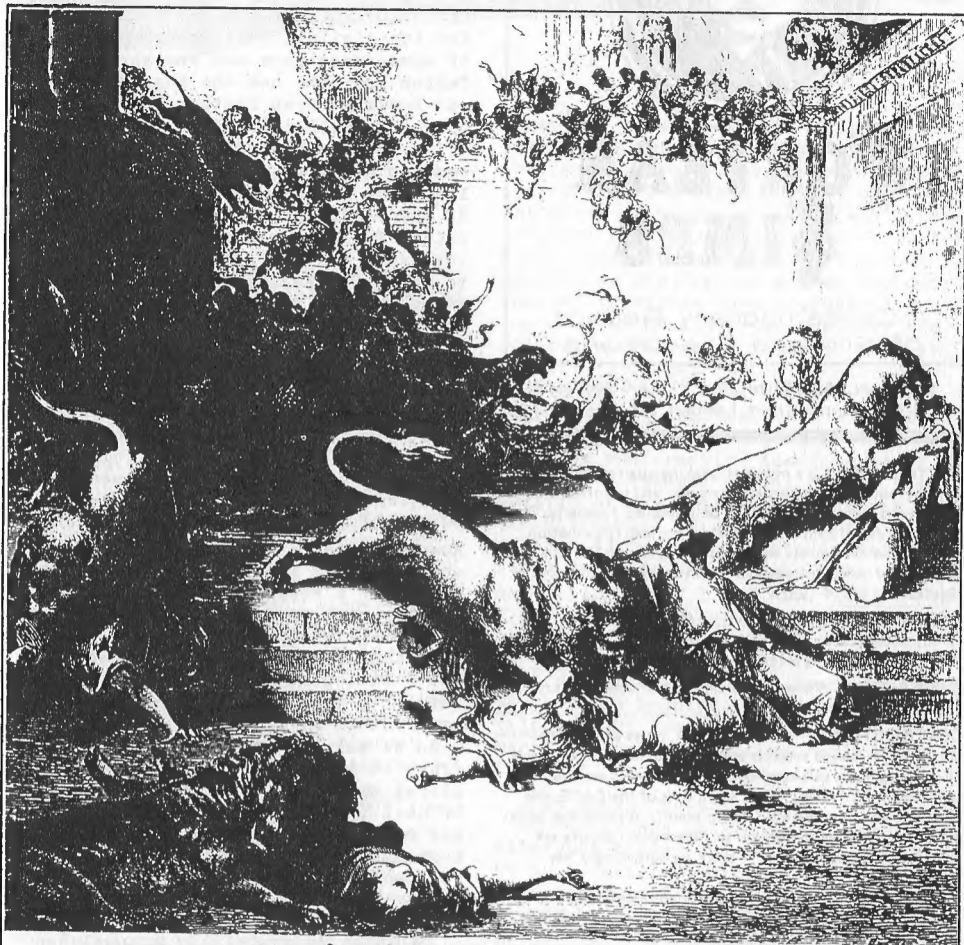
Does all of this hint at the ever tantalising links between Fortean phenomena and esoteric matters? Was the possible Illuminist Lafayette a magician of such power that the mere application of his name has been enough ever since to make a given place 'act up'? Or was he himself a mere unwitting function of the Fayette factor?

Bill Grimstad — 1977.

Notes of References

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- 2 *Kennebec Journal*, Augusta, Maine, Oct. 30, 1976.
- 3 *Time*. July 18, 1972, p. 91.
- 4 *Fate*, July 1977, p.28.
- 5 'All Things Considered', National Public Radio, Feb. 3, 1977.
- 6 *Cyclone and Fayette Republican*, Washington Court House, Ohio, April 22, 1897; cited by G.M. Eberhart, 'The Ohio Airship Story', *Pursuit*, no. 37, Winter 1977, p.4.
- 7 *Lima, Ohio, News*, May 6, 1977; *Bluffton, Ohio, News* May 5 & 19, 1977.
- 8 *Lost Treasure*, Sept. 1977, p.29.
- 9 *National Enquirer*, June 29, 1976.
- 10 *Bridgeport, Connecticut, Post*, Sept. 5, 1970.
- 11 *Skin Diver*, Jan. 1970, pp. 24ff.
- 12 Otto Eisenschiml, *Why was Lincoln Murdered?* Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1937, *passim*.
- 13 John Alexander, *Ghosts: Washington's Most Famous Ghost Stories*. Washingtonian Books, Washington, D.C. 1975, p.33.
- 14 Eisenschiml, *op. cit.*, p.375.
- 15 Jim Garrison, *A Heritage of Stone*. New York 1970, pp.79, 94ff.
- 16 Associated Press dispatch. *Tampa, Florida, Tribune*, July 4, 1977.
- 17 *New York Times*, Aug. 1, 1977, p. 34C.
- 18 Manly Palmer Hall, *America's Assignment With Destiny*, Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles, 1951, pp. 88-89. What could be more appropriate to this peculiar name game than that Hall draws heavily upon the learned French historian Bernard Fay for his account of this period?
- 19 M.P. Hall, *An Ecyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Cabbalistic, and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy*. Philos. Research Soc. Los Angeles, 1962, 16th ed., p. cc.
- 20 M.P. Hall, *America's Assignment With Destiny*, *op. cit.*, p.94
- 21 R.J. Martinez, *Mysterious Marie Laveau*, Harmonson, New Orleans, undated, pp. 32-33. Robert Tallant, *Voodoo in New Orleans*, Collier, New York, 1962, p.41.

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